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# A Congressional Perspective on Asia at the Outset of the Bush Administration

*The Honorable Henry J. Hyde*

Thank you very much for the invitation to be here today. I was delighted when Judy Sloan [Asia Society Washington Office Director] and Beth Brimner [program associate] asked me to appear before this distinguished body to share my views regarding U.S. policy toward Asia. Asia is of enormous importance to U.S. national interests, and its importance will only increase in the years to come.

I would like to talk for a while about the challenges and opportunities facing the new Bush administration on security matters, economic issues and on the promotion of democratic values.

It is clear the Bush Administration's foreign policy team does have the talent, the experience, and the long-term perspective to formulate a successful, coordinated Asia policy. Vice-President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, as well as Paul Wolfowitz and Rich Armitage, bring an enormous wealth of experience concerning Asia.

As a result, the Bush Administration comes to office with the ability set a steady course and advance American interests in Asia. In my view, it is the job of Congress, and in particular the House International Relations Committee, to continually review the administration's progress, work with the Administration to achieve common goals, and to provide suggestions and alternatives in the unlikely event of a disagreement. First, let me speak to our national security interests in Asia.

## Security

In Asia, American national security interests are best promoted through the presence of forward-based American military forces. At the present time, the United States maintains some 100,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines in the Pacific. Our troops are welcomed in Asia not as conquerors but instead as a deterrent to regional aggression and the rise of hegemonic forces. These brave men and women are tangible evidence of our long-term commitment to the region and provide an essential umbrella under which growing economies can prosper and young democracies can blossom.

Nevertheless, the cornerstone of the U.S. security structure in Asia remains our system of alliances. I fully expect that the Bush Administration will pay close attention to our alliance relationships with Japan, Australia, and the Republic of Korea. Japan is host to almost one-half of all forward-based U.S. forces. It has been an outstanding and generous host. I fully expect the Bush Administration to give this relationship the high priority and attention it deserves.

Similarly, we must continue to work in close concert with Australia. Australia has been an outstanding ally, and has taken a leadership role in regional matters such as peacekeeping in East Timor. Our alliance with the Republic of Korea remains a key to U.S. national security interests in Asia.

While alliance relationships are key in Asia, we still must engage the People's Republic of China in a way that is constructive, but that also promotes stability in the region. Secretary Powell stated in his confirmation hearing, "A strategic partner China is not, but neither is China our inevitable and implacable foe. China is a competitor, a potential regional rival, but also a trading partner willing to cooperate in areas where our strategic interests overlap." I find it difficult to disagree with that assessment.

Obviously, the most important potential point of contention with the PRC relates to Taiwan. The Taiwan Relations Act continues to require our government to provide Taiwan with the arms and equipment necessary to defend itself. In recent years, as the PRC's military capability has grown and its arsenal of missiles has increased, Congress has become increasingly concerned that arms sales to Taiwan have been inadequate. In the next month or so, the Bush Administration will have to make decisions about this year's arms sales to Taiwan.

I have no doubt that the new Administration will approve a number of long-delayed requests for Taiwan. Accordingly, I do not expect it will be necessary for Congress to take up the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act again this year.

I should also note that the Congress will undoubtedly support the Bush Administration's pursuit of ballistic missile defenses. Some in the region – principally China – have called this effort destabilizing. But such critics should understand that the development of missile defenses in part has been made necessary by the proliferation of ballistic missiles in China and North Korea. Since the North Korean flight test over Japan, we have been working with the Japanese to develop effective missile defenses. And, we certainly will look with interest at Taiwan's desire for missile defenses, which after all is a defense requirement that has resulted from deliberate decisions made by the government in Beijing.

No discussion of Asian security is complete without a mention of North Korea. The "Agreed Framework" that was negotiated with North Korea in 1994 is proving difficult to implement in the manner originally envisioned, as has been demonstrated by the delays that already have been encountered.

I believe that the Bush Administration has an opportunity to forge a bipartisan policy toward North Korea that can command the full support of Congress. To do this, however, will require extensive consultations between the new officials of the Administration and interested Members of Congress. Obviously there has not yet been time to conduct such consultations, but we look forward to engaging in them. Certainly the Administration will be in a much stronger position to address other looming issues, such as North Korea's proliferation and deployment of missiles, once it has achieved a political consensus at home.

## Economic Issues

The second basic precept of congressional policy under the Bush Administration will be support for an economically vibrant Asia and the opening and expanding of Asian markets.

Although it seems to have faded from our collective memory, the effects of the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s linger. The damage caused by the financial crisis was not limited to Asia. U.S. industry lost some \$30-\$40 billion in exports, which in turn resulted in manufacturing lay-offs and reduced agricultural exports. In order to prevent a repetition, the United States must exert leadership in continuing to press for much-needed structural reforms that will contribute to economic health and prosperity throughout the region.

The decision to approve Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) with China was one of the most important actions taken by the 106th Congress. The reduction of tariffs and the elimination of non-tariff trade barriers should be a great boon to American exporters. Now that the Congress has completed its responsibility, I am anxious that Beijing complete the WTO accession process.

As we look toward the entry of the People's Republic of China into the WTO, we must not lose sight of the fact that Taiwan has qualified for entry. Taiwan concluded its trade agreements long ago, and the major impediment to Taiwan's early entry appears to be fear of antagonizing Beijing. The Congress has made it clear also in the PNTR legislation that we expect Beijing and Taipei to enter the WTO simultaneously. I sincerely hope everyone understands how sensitive an issue this is and how strongly any attempt by Beijing to delay or derail Taiwan's accession could quickly backfire against the Chinese.

While the Congress certainly will work with the Bush Administration to promote exports to the region, we must also retain a measure of caution. As the Cox Committee discovered, there are governments who are very anxious to acquire our most sophisticated dual-use technology. I am pleased that our friends in the regions – such as Hong Kong and Singapore – work in such a cooperative fashion to establish outstanding export control regimes. We must continue and build upon this effort and ensure that, as we increase our exports to the region, we continue to maintain effective safeguards on our cutting-edge, dual use technologies.

## Democracy

The promotion of the universal values of democracy and human rights is an essential component – in the long run, perhaps the most important component – of U.S. foreign policy. This is particularly true in Asia, where a number of leaders have claimed that individual liberty and democracy are Western values with no applicability in cultures traditionally emphasizing a communal hierarchy.

The experience of the last few years, however, would suggest that the value of democratic principles is universal. Indeed, it was not so long ago that Japan was virtually the only fully functioning democracy in Asia. Now, looking across Asia, it is clear that democracy has emerged as a dominant force in the region. Opposition political parties have come to power and generally governed responsibly. Vibrant multi-party systems have emerged in India, Thailand, Taiwan, the Republic of Korea, and elsewhere. Peaceful changes of government have become the norm rather than the exception. I expect the Congress to fully support and expand programs that advance these values.

Thank you, and I'd be happy to take a few questions.